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April 21, 2008

Lafayette City Council
3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Suite 210
Lafayette, CA 94594

Re: Acalanes Ridge - East Bay Regional Park District Bond Measure

To the Honorable Members of the City Council:

A number of Lafayette residents have been working for several years to save Acalanes Ridge as open space. We believe that Acalanes Ridge can be preserved at minimal cost to the City of Lafayette if its acquisition is made or funded by the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) pursuant to a Measure AA Bond extension that EBRPD intends to have on the ballot in November, 2008. Moreover, we believe that such funding is appropriate given the regional significance of the property. This letter is intended to discuss the unique importance of Acalanes Ridge, introduce the Council to our group, and ask that the Lafayette City Council support preservation of Acalanes Ridge by formally requesting that EBRPD designate it as a "Regional Project." We attach a proposed letter for the City Council to consider for presentation to the Board of Directors of EBRPD.

BACKGROUND

WHO WE ARE

Our group – the Acalanes Ridge Committee – is composed of individuals who are concerned with protecting open space on Acalanes Ridge (portions of which are also known as Acalanes Heights). Many members of our group are members of the Secluded Valley Homeowners Association, and the group has the support of the Association Board. The Secluded Valley Homeowners Association includes 111 homes located in Lafayette and on adjacent unincorporated County land. We are also working with other interested members of the community, including members of the Springhill Homeowners Association in Lafayette. We have in the past demonstrated the ability to mobilize substantial community support, and we are prepared do so again at the opportune time. We are also working in conjunction with the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation, which worked to create the existing adjacent Acalanes Ridge Open Space.

DESCRIPTION OF ACALANES RIDGE

Acalanes Ridge is the ridge and hilltop that is directly above Acalanes High School to the northeast and which constitutes the eastern boundary of Lafayette in that area. We attach photographs and maps to illustrate the property. It abuts unincorporated County land to both the

north and east, and it is adjacent to the northern section of the Acalanes Ridge Open Space. That Open Space includes the East Bay Regional Park District's Mt. Diablo-Briones trail, as well as the Camino-Verde Trail, the Sousa Trail and the Ridge Top Trail. All three trails converge immediately below the highest portion of Acalanes Ridge. That hilltop is now crossed by a trail that is informal only in that it has no official designation. In fact, it has been well traveled for decades.

For the many hikers and runners who travel the trails that cross the ridge, the ridge offers an unparalleled 360 degree view that extends to the Berkeley Hills to the west, past the Carquinez Straits to Mt. St. Helena to the North, over all of Walnut Creek to Mt. Diablo to the East, and to Livermore and the Sunol Regional Park to the south. With respect to Lafayette, Acalanes Ridge is the dominant hill in the area when viewed from Acalanes High School, Pleasant Hill Road north of Highway 24, and adjacent neighborhoods. It is also a prominent hilltop from broad areas of Lafayette which are located south of Highway 24. It is visible from as far away as the Lafayette reservoir.

The Ridge serves as an important wildlife sanctuary and corridor. It is hunting ground to hawks, owls, the shy and beautiful black-shouldered kite, and other raptors that regularly soar over adjacent Lafayette homes. It is the home to fox, coyote, deer and other smaller animals, as well as part of the territory of a mountain lion that has been spotted on several occasions. The Ridge also has important recreational value, as it is immediately accessible to the High School and the many homes in the area. Acalanes High School cross-country team members run on the trails, and many local residents regularly hike to the top for the view or exercise, or to use the trail for access to the adjacent public lands.

Most people in the area had assumed that Acalanes Ridge was part of property owned by the East Bay Municipal Utility District, which has a well-concealed reservoir on the hill, and hence that it was protected from development. We were surprised to learn differently in 2002 when the highest portion of the property – consisting of 22.5 acres – was suddenly sold for development. There is also a lower vacant portion of the ridge area which has been known to be privately owned, but which is now vacant.

EFFORTS TO PRESERVE ACALANES RIDGE

We started this letter by saying that we have worked to preserve Acalanes Ridge. We have been at this task for over four years. Acalanes Ridge offers unique aesthetic contributions to our community. It would truly be tragic if they were forever lost.

A few months ago we learned that the property was listed for sale. The original multiple listing has since been canceled, but it appears that the owner may still be willing to sell the property. Thus, we believe that there is a window of opportunity to acquire the property for the purpose of protecting it. We have been working towards that end.

THE BOND MEASURE

Our group, working with others who have substantial experience with past similar open space protection projects, has identified potential sources of both public and private funding. The most promising is the upcoming Measure AA Bond extension sponsored by EBRPD for the November, 2008 ballot.

The "Proposed Bond Measure to Preserve Future Open Space" is an extension of the 1988-2008 Measure AA Bond. EBRPD has used or allocated all funds provided by Measure AA, a twenty year bond measure passed by voters in 1988 that helped preserve 34,000 acres of open space. The new bond measure would extend Measure AA by providing new funding for Regional Park land acquisition, new park and trail development, habitat restoration and rehabilitation of aging park facilities, as well as funding for city parks and recreation departments and special park districts to meet local needs. Because the proposed measure merely replaces the prior, expiring property tax financing, EBRPD states that the bond extension will not cause a tax rate increase.

The bond measure provides for a division of funds into two categories. First, EBRPD will use seventy-five percent (75%) of the funds for acquisition, restoration and rehabilitation. Second, twenty-five percent (25%) of the funds will be distributed on a per capita basis to the cities within the EBRPD jurisdiction. Lafayette reportedly will receive roughly $1.1 million in per capita funds.

Although the per capita funds could be used to purchase Acalanes Ridge, the purchase would drain most of Lafayette's allocation of the funds. Thus, it would be preferable for the Ridge to be listed on EBRPD's list of "Regional Projects" to be acquired with EBRPD's funds from the bond measure. Additionally, this would be entirely appropriate. Like other cities, Lafayette should have per capita funds available to it for the development of recreational facilities of primarily local import. In view of the strategic location of Acalanes Ridge with respect to, in addition to Lafayette, unincorporated County, Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill, and existing public lands, it is truly a property of regional significance. It is a resource for more than just Lafayette.

REQUEST FOR CITY OF LAFAYETTE ACTION

We have consulted with individual board members and members of the staff of EBRPD. It is clear that Acalanes Ridge will be listed as a property to be purchased with EBRPD funds only if the City of Lafayette and other public bodies request that EBRPD designate the property as a Regional Project and can exert sufficient influence to support that request. Because the property is relatively small compared to most EBRPD acquisition targets, and it is not contiguous to EBRPD-owned land, the EBRPD staff indicated that they would assume that Lafayette would use its per capita funds for the purchase. In order to obtain passage of the bond measure, however, EBRPD must obtain a 2/3 majority vote, and EBRPD needs the support of Lafayette and other cities in its jurisdiction in order to win passage. Thus, we believe that EBRPD may be willing to list the property if Lafayette (and, possibly, Walnut Creek) indicates that it is important to the City that the property be included on EBRPD's Regional Project list.

The Regional Project list is, as we understand it, still subject to revision. Accordingly, Lafayette has an opportunity to influence its final designation of projects. To do so, Lafayette must act while that opportunity still exists.

A proposed letter is attached for the City Council's consideration.

CONCLUSION

Acalanes Ridge is prominent, beautiful, regularly used by Lafayette and other residents, important for wildlife preservation, and irreplaceable. Due to a confluence of events, some of which are extremely time sensitive, there is a window of opportunity to purchase and preserve the Ridge now that may well not be available in the future. Lafayette's support for EBRPD's purchase of the property is essential in order to take advantage of this opportunity. Accordingly, we respectfully

request that the City Council express its support, in the strongest possible terms, for designation of Acalanes Ridge as an EBRPD Regional Project.

Respectfully submitted,

Eliot R. Hudson

Mark Zemelman

Cc: with enclosures
Steven Falk
City Manager

Jennifer Russell
Director, Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission

SANF1/392784.1

PROPOSED LETTER TO THE HONORABLE DIRECTORS OF THE EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Dear Directors:

This letter is respectfully submitted to convey the formal request of the City Council of Lafayette that East Bay Regional Park District ("EBRPD") designate Acalanes Ridge as a Regional Project with respect to any funds that may be acquired pursuant to the proposed Measure AA Bond extension. This request includes currently vacant parcels that now lie between the northern and southern segments of protected open space along Acalanes Ridge

Acalanes Ridge is in all respects truly a regional resource. This Council believes that it is appropriate for the EBRPD to commit bond measure funds to preserve the property. This Council recognizes that EBRPD often deals in larger parcels, and that there are many worthy projects under consideration. Nonetheless, Acalanes Ridge has characteristics that make it an important regional priority:

- Acalanes Ridge includes property important to multiple jurisdictions. It lies on the extreme eastern border of Lafayette. It abuts unincorporated County land to both the north and east. It is adjacent to the existing Acalanes Ridge Open Space. It has recognized importance to Walnut Creek. Pleasant Hill lies immediately to the north.
- The East Bay Regional Park District's Mt. Diablo-Briones trail runs along the border of property that is included within this request for Regional Project designation. Intersecting with that trail in the same area are the Camino-Verde Trail, the Sousa Trail and the Ridge Top Trail. Each of those trails leads to a different neighborhood and provides each of them access to Acalanes Ridge.
- Acalanes Ridge is centrally located within this area. It is the highest point between Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill and Lafayette.
- Acalanes Ridge has an unparalleled 360 degree view that extends to the Berkeley Hills to the west, past the Carquinez Straits to Mt. St. Helena to the North, over all of Walnut Creek to Mt. Diablo to the East, and to Livermore and the Sunol Regional Park to the south.
- Because Acalanes Ridge is the dominant ridge in this region, its preservation is essential to the semi-rural character of this central area of Contra Costa County. That is important not only for people who live in the surrounding communities, but also for the much larger number of people who transit these communities on a daily basis.
- The Ridge serves as an important wildlife habitat and corridor. It is part of the territory and hunting grounds of a mountain lion, fox, coyote, a variety of raptors (including the black-shouldered kite), and numerous other species.
- Acalanes Ridge has long been traversed by a year-round informal trail that is used for access to the trails in the Acalanes Ridge Open Space, for access to the views at the top of the Ridge, and for hiking and running.
- A simple drive to the area and a ten minute walk to the top of Acalanes Ridge will dazzle anyone who takes the time, and will confirm each of the points we make in this letter.

Lafayette notes that twenty-five percent (25%) of the proposed bond extension funds will be designated as per capita funds for cities within the EBRPD boundaries. The use of Lafayette's per capita funds to preserve Acalanes Ridge is not an equitable or viable option. Most EBRPD cities will be free to utilize their per capita funds on neighborhood parks and similar projects of truly local significance. That is laudable and welcome. The likely cost of preserving Acalanes

Ridge, however, would exhaust substantially all of Lafayette's per capita allocation for the entire life of the bond measure. Acalanes Ridge is not merely important to Lafayette. It truly has regional significance. This Council respectfully submits that its preservation should be funded as such.

Acalanes Ridge is a highly important resource to the region that should be preserved for the benefit of all residents in the surrounding areas. We respectfully request your designation of Acalanes Ridge as a Regional Project.

Very truly yours,

Peaceful Ln, Lafayette, CA 94549
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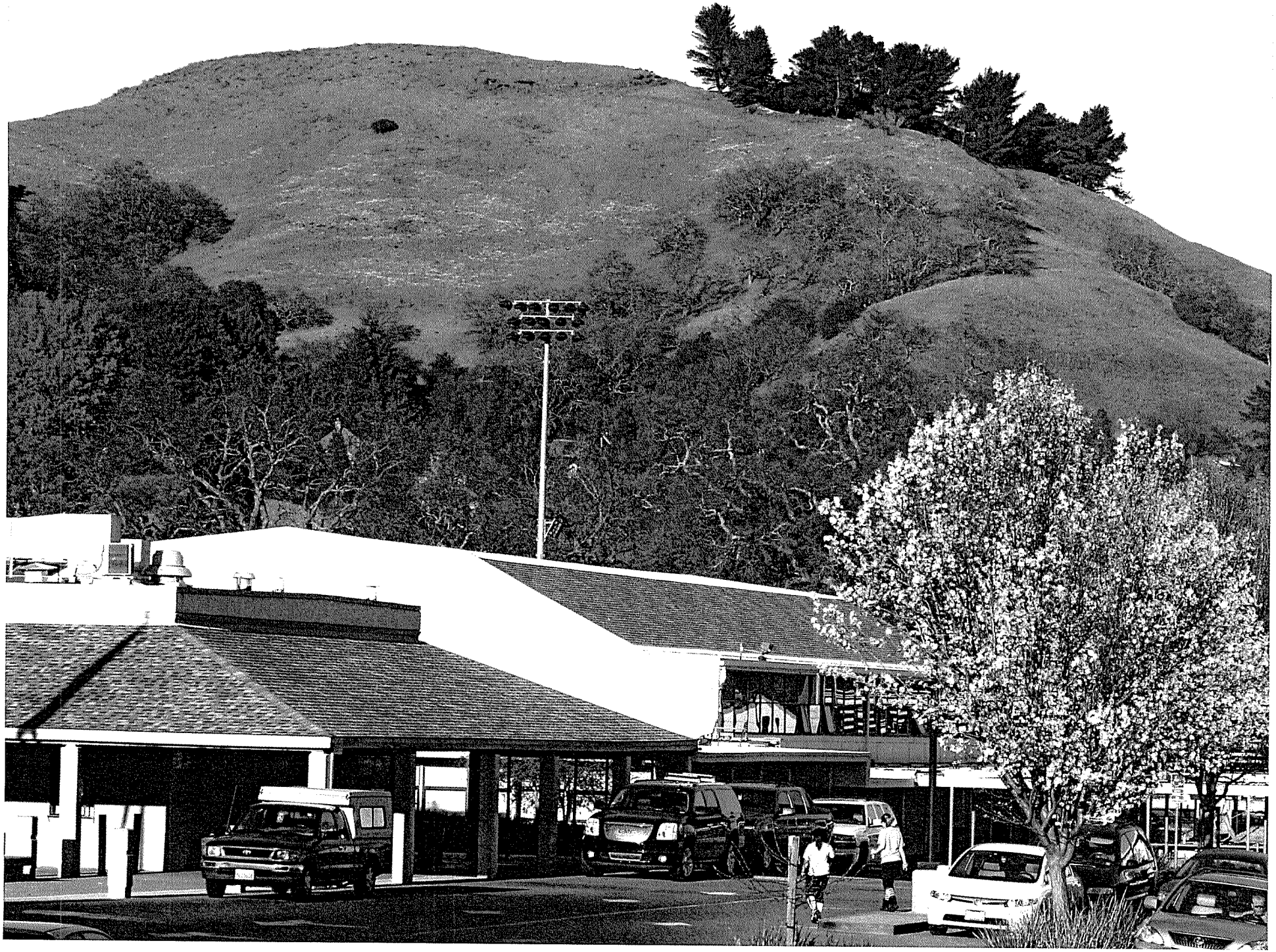
122°05'48.20" W elev 322 ft
Streaming 100%



Peaceful Ln, Lafayette, CA 94549
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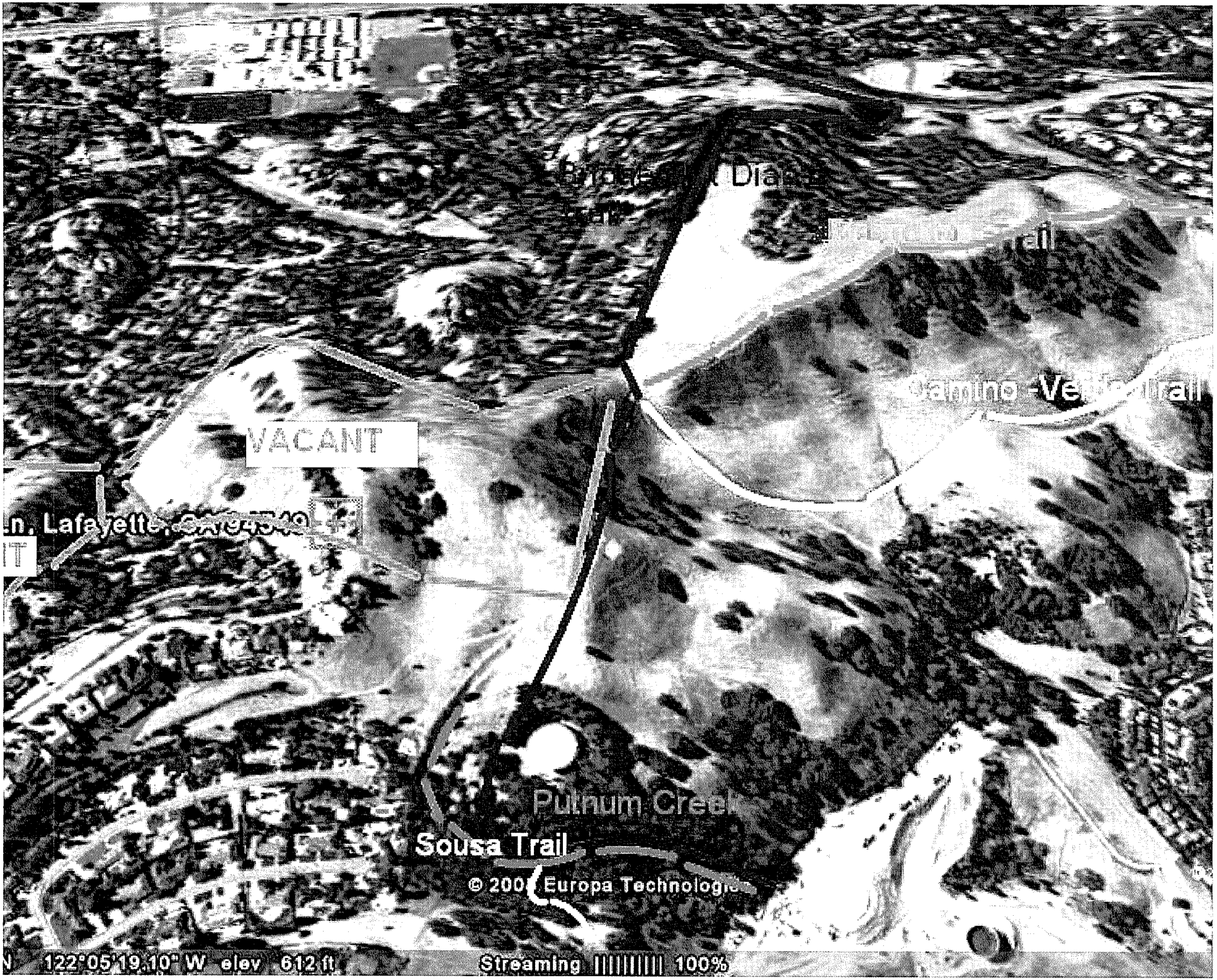
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Putnum Creek
Sousa Trail
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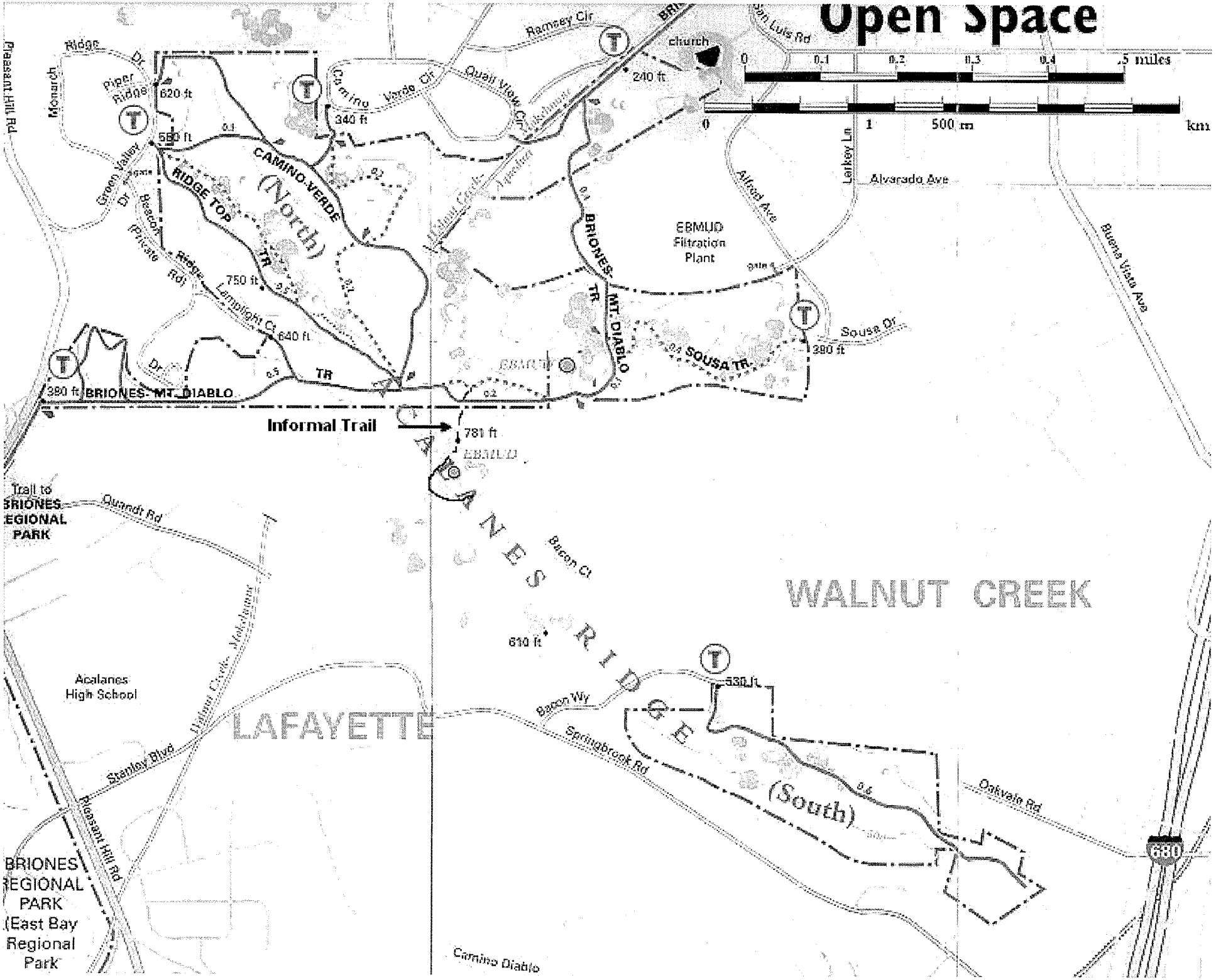
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Ramsey Cir
church
240 ft
Quail View Cir
Camino Verde Cir
340 ft
Mountain Ridge Dr
Piper Ridge
620 ft
580 ft
Green Valley Dr
Beacon (Private Rd)
Ridge Lamplight Ct
750 ft
640 ft
CAMINO VERDE
(North)
RIDGE TOP TR
BRIONES-MT. DIABLO TR
EBMUD Filtration Plant
Alvarado Ave
Larkey Ln
Alfred Ave
Buena Vista Ave
Sousa Dr
380 ft
SOUSA TR
Informal Trail
781 ft
Trail to BRIONES REGIONAL PARK
Quandt Rd
Bacon Ct
ACALANES RIDGE
WALNUT CREEK
610 ft
530 ft
Bacon Wy
Springbrook Rd
(South)
Oakvale Rd
Acalanes High School
LAFAYETTE
Stanley Blvd
Pleasant Hill Rd
Camino Diablo
BRIONES REGIONAL PARK (East Bay Regional Park
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